**Note of meeting with SNH on biodiversity and its funding, 29 March 2018.**

**Attending:** Francesca Osowska (SNH CEO) for the first half, and Sally Thomas (Director of Policy and Advice, SNH). Paul Walton (LINK Trustee, RSPB, Wildlife Subgroup), Stuart Brooks (NTS), Bruce Wilson (SWT, Wildlife Subgroup), Alison Connelly (SEFF, RSPB), Steven Gardner (SEFF, RSPB), Alice Walsh (LINK staff).

The meeting was organised to discuss Biodiversity the funding of it. The contest was delivery against Aichi targets and new mechanisms for post 2020; changes to SNH’s funding arrangements with eNGOs; and a shared awareness of the lack of funding for biodiversity.

SNH: Brexit notwithstanding, SNH wants a collective conversation to 1) see how we deliver against 2020 and then beyond it. Range of players and relationships, funding related and otherwise, and how to ensure we are not tripping over ourselves with HLF, and 2) being creative collectively for bringing more funding in from other sources to support biodersity.

LINK: Could SNH be moving too far away from biodiversity into more of a people focus, noting that eNGOs live or die by their memberships, so we have no problem with the people and nature agenda, asked whether the balance for SNH is moving away from its territory, wrt biodiversity. How can our sector help and work with SNH to get more funding for biodiversity conservation, with Scotland trading on its clean green image for economic benefits. Noted too the lack of a strong case made for SNH’s own funding. 2020 is very soon, there are long lead in times for 3rd party funders. Need for leadership here (all agreed).

SNH’s strategic direction has been made in dialogue with staff, the reasons why they are putting the emphasis on people come from that engagement, staff feedback was they have been doing it for 25 years, but not been telling it enough in customer friendly way. Seen as regulators rather than facilitators/enablers, can be more effective. At the Committee session were asked if they are moving away from their core purposes, enhancing biodiversity and speaking for nature. Answered that they will do all of it, which has implications for resourcing, so moving more focus upstream. Funding commitments, through SRDP and designated sites, is heavily skewed to biodiversity and rural areas and improving nature. The Corporate Plan was deliberately designed to signal an adjustment of course by degrees, and putting people and communities at the heart, is not moving away from those principles. They want a much clearer understanding of where the red lines are. SEPA became more facilitative, but has strong red lines. Francesca wants SNH to do similarly and work with different audiences, to be the organisation that defends nature, is the context.

SNH: 2020 is not a hard stop. Most recent report is with SGovt, due soon. Identified the targets that are not going to be met without significant intervention, and the key players, not just on the Route Map, to do this. Have clearance from Govt to proceed. Some are NDPBs, some NGOs. Will be doing targeted work to get them up to scratch by 2020. That bit is defined, so easy in one sense, recognise there are major challenges.

LINK: Last report flagged up that 8 out of 12 were behind due to funding issues. So is this within the existing frameworks? Sally: yes, but including targeting of others funding. Paul: In context of decreasing funds.

LINK: HLF consultation, which is the one lottery area for biodiversity funding, has focus on urban regeneration and biodiversity in cities, green spaces and heritage as a tool to deliver on social issues. In contrast 40% of funds go to the Big Lottery, which has environment in its remit, but does not fund anything environmental. There is a role for them to work together. DCMS has no concept of biodiversity in Scotland.

SNH: HLF wants to see the sector better coordinated, is looking for SNH to do this – prioritisation and streamlining bids. LINK: In the context of closure of 2 of their key environmental programmes, and their open programme being heavily biased towards the build heritage (all these points made during the consultation), and biodiversity projects being harder for the panel to understand. Paul summarised that in the context of diminishing funding still shrinking, when it comes to SNH’s own Challenge fund priorities, and the framework grants to eNGOs gone, and the current priorities – how can we work with SNH on it to improve the situation? There is merit in identifying priorities (eg for INNS), but the sector is multi-dimensional, and it is really difficult. Smaller organisations are doing good work outwith the Route Map priorities, and albeit recognising the great effort that went into getting these, they don’t want to be hidebound by them. Many organisations apply that are not in LINK too.

Francesca noted (later) that it is worth picking up with SGovt on where they influence the HLF and Big priorities, and if there something on connectivity between HLF and Big to take forward.

*Where the Green Grants Went Scotland* report findings were discussed in relation to the different channels we need to address to get more recognition that Scotland needs resources in line with its greater responsibilities for biodiversity; and the difficulties of getting matched funding. The narrative on independence turned off some UK private trusts. Has SNH done any thinking on corporate sources? There has been a conversation at Board level about diversification of income, will take some small steps. SGovt is doing some work with VisitScotland and others on Scotland the Brand, how to activate the brand to ensure investment into Scotland pcl. Landscape and beauty, a tangible reason for external investors. SNH is not part of that conversation, a gap.

If overlaying the Route Map with drivers for change, that helps identify priorities. Sally noted the great effort to agree these and hopes we can have agreement on the drivers of change. It has never been a case of all that needs to be done, was never intended to cover everything.

**Post 2020** thinking is at early stage of looking at the evidence, hope we are involved or will be. Not consulting yet on targets post Beijing. Two strands, evidence gathering so there is an agreed position on the state of biodiversity across Scotland, ie no disagreements between the SNH reports and the State of Nature reports, ensure we are working on the same baselines. Second stand is about hearts and minds, between now and 2020, to build momentum towards a new set of targets, that all are behind at the start. Paul noted the shifting baseline syndrome, eg the Natural Capital Asset index, and the perception that SNH wants to represent biodiversity as being in a good state. Our view is that we have to take an historic perspective, which SoN does include. **Agreed on the importance of working together.**

Issues around redesign of the CAP and SRDP and the **direction of rural funding post CAP**, it would be helpful if **SNH can provide some leadership** on it. NFUS’s policy document is focussed on Pillar 1. There is huge potential for investment in the natural environment. Also **Protected Areas**, our best sites, there is not much in the Corporate Strategy about these, we detect a shift on these, that SNH is asking for the PA indicator in the National Performance Framework to be removed, this is concerning.

Sally: its not as simple as that. PAs are fairly tightly bound and need to make the connections, are not sufficient in themselves.

LINK: LIFE, major source of funding for Scotland over the last 25 years, options of a biodiversity formula rather than a Barnett formula. SNH agreed this was a useful way of thinking, we have the ability to provide a lot of public benefits on climate change.

LINK: Scope of **discussion post 2020**. It is driven by review of the Aichi targets, been quite silo’ed. We would like to broaden that out post 2020 to bring the two things together, not to downplay biodiversity and its focus. NGOs are very support of the Land Use Strategy – could be a useful tool.

**New Challenge funds**: we suggest that these will be better targeted if they are **co-designed with those that might be expected to apply**. Concern that the limited funding in this round is such that NGOs will not apply.

Francesca, on funding and different ways of widening the funding avenues, and her being new, sees it being about the relationships that SNH has with the bodies it funds, broad scale and broad church, has started that conversation here, hears what the Corporate Plan is saying to us, would value our reaction, and asked whether to have this conversation through LINK. Advice to SGovt on lottery in terms of collective applications, worth picking this up with leads in SNH, those charged with diversifying the income. Bruce added the preventative spent agenda particularly on health, useful for SNH to have a conversation with LINK and some of the individual eNGOs too. Paul added the co-design point, noting that the INNS group of the SBS had not met for a while, would be interest there is helping with that funding stream.

**Agreed that these conversations would start through LINK, involving individual members too.**

Post 2020 targets may be framed in terms of the Sustainable Development Goals. Sally hoped all logos could be on it together this time. Paul agreed, noting that some of the issues are because of the differing roles of the NGOs, to push for the maximum outcomes for nature.

The National Ecological Network is a parallel issue, with protected areas as the backbone. This has to tie into LUS and post CAP funding, and must get these right in the Biodiversity Strategy.

Francesca noted how the **LUS** has come up quite a lot with various stakeholders, and is a crucial pillar. It’s a bit stuck, and SNH is trying to unstick it. They are continuing these efforts but cannot hang around forever, will look at what can be progressed with it in abeyance. Bruce assured the support of the eNGOs on pushing the LUS. He raised **Coul Links**, with thanks to SNH for sticking with its objection, and the offer for any help that can be given to sustain its position. SNH is still digesting the volumes of new information, though the key point is on the location on the dunes remains. Francesca left the meeting.

**NEN:** Sally recapped on where we are. SNH and LINK are comfortable with it. SGovt is not very happy, there was concern at the original LINK paper for NEN to be a ‘material consideration’ in Planning, not wanting to see it as a designation or lines on a map, so it too is a bit stuck.

Bruce would be concerned if it was toothless, if no material consideration applied. Paul noted the planning systems faults in dealing with cumulative effects, but that it need not use those exact words, something around connectivity? There was some discussion of the Planning Bill and the Simplified Planning Zones as a green light for developers, so there could well be plans for developments that would destroy existing connectivity. The NGOs won’t push for NEN if it is meaningless. It was put into the NPF without much thought. Govt does not know what it is, to what extent it is urban/rural/covers all of Scotland, including marine. With a lot of good things happening across the country now it is piecemeal. If we do get another pilot, trialling alongside the LUS, mapping the opportunities and how to get the most impact from funding. Would like to arrive together at something that does work.

Suggestion of creating a **rural NEN to get the ball rolling**, and **principles established**, example of Cairngorms Connect. Having a NEN over urban areas – Living Landscapes Cumbernauld? where there is real trouble engaging with developers. Paul summarised that nothing is off the table for LINK, though we must not lose sight of where it comes from, has to be considered at scale.

The action plan has a tentative move to the marine environment. Sally thought Marine Scotland is a bit wary, maybe more than can be chewed here, for longer term. We should get the principles established, so everyone is happy with it, then see if can translate to marine.

The SBS Species & Habitats group has ownership of the list (?), Paul asked where that thinking is going? Ecolite network (?) as something to roll out. Bruce said it needs to be more than a project. In terms of the principles that underpin it, we can use that a base. Members of that group had been sent away to rethink.

Bruce asked, with the new Planning Bill making the NPF the most important document in Scotland, and the problems with the Bill, and nervousness on it, and if they don’t want a NEN to have any traction there, would PQs help? Definitely not! More effective on the LUS.

**SRDP**: Bruce suggested SNH convene a workshop to get together on the post CAP thinking, we are not wedded to the SRDP structure, and should be talking about what we want to do from a blank slate. David Barnes leads, is waiting for the Agri Champions report. Likely timescale is 2023. **We would like to see a strategic process led by SNH to look at these issues in the round.**

Paul gave example of Chicago Wilderness, a possible contributor to the Euro Cities conference.
Bruce would send Sally the latest iteration of the Natural Capital Standard.

**How to proceed with the shared approaches to HLF?**
Matched funding opportunities are drying up. There are a few big players in our sectors, the serial applicants. HLF tell us to co-ordinate, are they also asking other sectors? Agreed we need to minimise competitiveness between the NGOs. HLF want to see more funding going to the environment, but say we are uncoordinated. Unwritten rule is that Scotland gets one project, at UK level. Scottish HLF understands the issues. We should help them to help London understand it. There is a political sensitivity to presenting Scotland in the UK context.

**It was agreed that we keep each other and SNH informed about initiatives coming up. SEFF is the LINK forum for this chiefly.**

**Challenge funds.** If LINK could have an opportunity to contribute to how it rolls out, to sense check, that would be good. Examples of where NGOs are getting knock backs currently with good projects.

**Aggregate tax:** could be useful for biodiversity funding, as a match source. There are opportunities for further behavioural change taxes, like plastic bag, to be ringfenced for environment, rather than allocated as it is to non-green causes. The loss of EU project funding, is a major blow. We have been advocating with SGov about this problem, interested in working together to see if we can generate some gap filling funds, a UK level discussion.

**SNH will take the advocacy of funding to its senior leadership team.** Alan Hampson, Head of Corporate Services is the lead, or we can come through Sally.

LINK to pursue a meeting with Francesca and Mike Cantley.

AW 4/4/18